

PFAS and Health

What is PFAS?

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) is a group of chemicals that were developed in the 1950s and have been distributed worldwide since. PFAS chemicals are used in many commercial goods and industrial processes. Some PFAS chemicals, including PFOA and PFOS, have been phased out of use in the United States but many others, including GenX, are still used today.

How can I be exposed to PFAS?

Primary forms of exposure for adults and children are through food that has been grown or raised in PFAS contaminated soil and water, like fish and shellfish, from food that is packaged in materials designed to be resistant to steam and grease, like pizza boxes, fast food wrappers, and microwave popcorn bags, and from drinking contaminated water. Exposure can also occur from PFAS contaminated dust. People who work in industries that use PFAS are more likely to have higher levels as well.

Infant and toddlers have different PFAS exposures than older individuals. They can be exposed to PFAS through formula made with water contaminated with PFAS, breastmilk from women with current or past PFAS exposure, and from hand to mouth behavior. PFAS can also cross the placenta and enter umbilical cord blood.

How can my health be affected?

Research on the health effects of PFAS is ongoing. Exposure to PFAS does not mean that you will have health problems now or in the future. Potential effects from PFAS include:

- Increased cholesterol levels
- Increased chance of cancer, especially kidney and testicular cancers
- Increase chance of thyroid disease
- Increase chance of preeclampsia and gestational hypertension

If you have any concerns about your health and PFAS exposure, you should talk to your doctor. It is always good to have regular check-ups for possible health conditions.

Can I breastfeed if I am exposed to PFAS?

Infants can be exposed to PFAS through breastmilk. However, benefits of breastfeeding outweigh the benefits of not breastfeeding. Breastfeeding benefits both baby and the mother. If you have concerns about breastfeeding and PFAS, you should talk to your child's doctor. For additional information on breast feeding, go to [ISDH: Breastfeeding](#).

How does PFAS exposure affect my pregnancy?

PFAS exposure is associated with pregnancy induced hypertension and pre-eclampsia. Blood pressure monitoring is a routine part of prenatal care and no additional blood pressure monitoring

will be needed because of your exposure. You should continue to go to all your prenatal visits and discuss any health concerns with your doctor.

Can PFAS exposure affect my vaccinations?

A few studies have reported that certain types of PFAS can reduce the immune response to some immunizations. However, these studies do not suggest re-evaluating the normal immunization schedule. Vaccinations do not need to be repeated.

Where can I get more information about PFAS?

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry: www.atsdr.cdc.gov/pfas

Environmental Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/pfas>

Contact

Indiana Department of Health
Environmental Public Health
317-233-1325